



department for
education and skills

14–19 strategic planning

a practical handbook for
schools, colleges and
their partners

Book 3

Putting learners first



**14–19: Programme of Support
for Delivery of Change on the Ground**



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Book 3
Putting learners first

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This book is part of a series which together comprise the 14–19 Strategic Planning handbook. The series was edited by Professor Andrew Miller of Active Learning Research Associates for the Learning and Skills Development Agency's (LSDA's) Vocational Learning Support Programme. The main contributors to this book are: Sylvia Thomson and Janet Donohue (on information, advice and guidance); Terry Fiehn (on the learner voice); and Andrew Miller (on equality and diversity).

Background and purpose

This book is part of the Learning and Skills Development Agency's 14–19 Programme of Support for Delivery of Change on the Ground. It is the third book in a series which together comprise *14–19 strategic planning: a practical handbook for schools, colleges and their partners*. The first two books were *Broadening the 14–19 curriculum and Developments in 14–19 teaching and learning*.

Effective strategic planning is a key element in ensuring that the quality, coverage and cost-effectiveness of education and training across an area are optimised and that resources are effectively deployed to meet learners' needs. The Strategic Area Reviews and Ofsted have identified several areas where provision is still weak, for example, strategy, leadership, access and participation, quality and guidance. *The 14–19 education and skills implementation plan* (DfES 2005a) sets out the plan for reform to 2013, but requires schools, colleges and other partners to work towards a significantly changed system by 2008:

By 2008, we expect that many of the effective ideas and practices which so far have been developed in a few areas of the country, in 14–19 Pathfinders, the Increased Flexibility programme or in other local developments, will have become the norm nationally.

(DfES 2005a para 1.28)

The handbook aspires to make a contribution to this policy goal. The main purpose of the books in the series is to present a summary for busy managers of some of the key elements in the development of the 14–19 phase of education and training. The aspiration is that they can gain a quick overview of the issues, not a comprehensive document on each issue, as this would be overlong and unusable. The topics chosen have emerged through the experience and evaluation of the 14–19 Pathfinders, and from talking to head teachers. The handbook aims to be a useful resource that managers can call on when planning, implementing and reviewing 14–19 strategy as part of the process of strategic planning. At its simplest it seeks to answer the questions 'What works and what do we need to take into account when developing our 14–19 plans?'

Putting learners first

Putting learners first has long been a slogan for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and all education and training providers are now realising that this is central to the future of the 14–19 phase. This book covers three key issues in the development of the 14–19 phase: information, advice and guidance; equality and diversity; and the learner voice.

Unit 1: Improving information, advice and guidance

Provision of high-quality information, advice and guidance (IAG) is essential to help students and their parents choose suitable progression routes. *The 14–19 education and skills implementation plan* (DfES 2005a), the White Paper, *Skills: getting on in business, getting on at work* (DfES 2005b) and the Green Paper, *Youth matters* (DfES 2005c) all place a high priority on providing learners with good quality IAG, to enable all young people to progress and make successful transitions through learning and into employment in the 21st-century labour market. The unit aims to provide a guide to what 14–19 providers need to know about IAG in order to improve its effectiveness.

Unit 2: Equality and diversity

There is a growing concern that more can be done to tackle issues of gender stereotyping and under-achievement in vocational programmes. The White Paper, *Getting on in business, getting on in work*, which was aimed at employers, set out to:

Tackle the obstacles that continue to prevent fair access for all to high-quality training and good jobs, so that no group is held back by prejudice, discrimination or stereotyping. Through better tailoring of information and guidance, we will help people work out the best options for them on skills, training and jobs, in order to achieve their ambitions.

(DfES 2005b)

The LSC has developed a strategy for promoting equality and diversity in the 14–19 programmes that it funds. *The 14–19 education and skills implementation plan* (DfES 2005a) also stresses the importance of partnerships taking account of equality and diversity in a more systematic way. Most recently attention was drawn to the role of education and training in relation to the gender pay gap by the Women and Work Commission in its report *Shaping a fairer future* (2006). The unit aims to give a quick overview of the issues and the actions that providers need to take to improve equality in 14–19 education and training provision.

Unit 3: Learner voice

The imperative to involve learners in real decision-making over their curriculum has become a key element of the 14–19 reforms. The LSC has required learner consultation for some time and now both *Every child matters* (DfES 2004b) and the *Youth matters* (DfES 2005c) put listening to the learner voice and learner participation as central ideas. This unit gives a quick overview of the field, but for more detailed advice the LSDA has published *Developing the learner voice* (LSDA 2006a).

Unit structure

The authors of each of the following units have tried to extract the main points that have emerged from the various official reports on this aspect of the 14–19 agenda. Each topic begins with a strategic aim, which is expressed as a broad intention to bring about planned change with an institution. There then follows a number of headings, which vary depending on the topic:

- **Strategic aim** an outline of the overall purpose of the unit
- **Definition** the meaning of any technical terms used in the topic
- **Rationale** the explanation as to why this change in the 14–19 curriculum is desirable
- **Policy** extracts from the key government or official policy papers and statements
- **Benefits** the main advantages to students from the proposed change
- **Research findings** the main findings of relevant research and evaluation
- **Ofsted findings** the main findings and conclusions found in Ofsted reports
- **Case studies** case studies describing projects that addressed the key elements being addressed in the unit
- **Critical success factors** the main good practice points emerging from research, evaluation and guidance documents (also include a discussion of key barriers in some cases)
- **Self-review questions** questions to aid audit and critical reflection on current practice and readiness for the change; some based on the Ofsted framework for inspection and self-evaluation framework
- **Exemplar strategic plan** an illustrative table showing the strategic intent, capacity-building measures and strategic planning tasks necessary when introducing the change
- **Web links** an annotated list of useful websites for further information on the topic which are also referred to in the text
- **References** details of reports, guidance, White Papers and so on that are referred to in the text. These are listed together at the end of the report.

Further guidance

Clearly, readers can follow the web links and references for further information on each topic. However, LSDA is also publishing a series of guides to accompany the manual, which go into more detail on selected topics. The 14–19 Programme of Support for Delivery of Change on the Ground is an LSDA/Learning and Skills Network (LSN) programme funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), which includes the development of materials, and accompanying training and networking opportunities.

Unit 1

Improving information, advice and guidance

5

Strategic aim

To improve the quality and impartiality of information, advice and guidance available to learners

Definition

Information, advice and guidance (IAG) for young people is identified in para 168 of the DfES's Green Paper *Youth matters* as:

- *personal development learning delivered through the curriculum, including careers education, work-related learning and financial capability*
- *confidential and impartial advice and support*
- *information and guidance on jobs, skills, the labour market and the full range of vocational and non-vocational options.*

DfES (2005c)

IAG is usually known as careers education and guidance (CEG) in schools. It is the process that helps 14–19 year olds to make successful transitions through learning and into work. It comprises:

- **careers education** a planned programme in the curriculum that helps students gain knowledge and develop skills for planning and managing their careers
- **careers information** on learning options, skills, occupations and progression routes
- **work-related learning** experiences within the curriculum and outside school, which help them learn about, for, and through work (see Book 1, Unit 5)
- **personalised support and guidance** help for individuals to enable them to review, plan and manage their learning and progression to the next stage (often now called individual learning planning (see Book 2, Unit 1)
- **careers guidance** help from specialist advisers with knowledge of the opportunities and the pathways to and through them, so they can identify their long-term goals and plan steps to attain them.

This process begins in Key stage 3 with preparing for the curriculum choices that young people make in Years 9 and 11, which have implications for their future progression routes.

Rationale

The *14–19 education and skills implementation plan* (DfES 2005a), the White Paper, *Skills: getting on in business, getting on at work* (DfES 2005b), and the Green Paper, *Youth matters* (DfES 2005c), identify the provision of good quality IAG as a high priority to enable all young people to progress and make successful transitions through learning and into employment in the 21st-century labour market. The evaluations of the 14–19 Pathfinders, the Increased Flexibility Programme for 14–16 year olds and the End-to-End Review of Careers Education and Guidance showed that provision of good quality IAG is patchy and that learners want more help with their choices. There is evidence that learners who receive good quality IAG achieve better and are less likely to drop out of learning or change course after they are 16.

Policy

Under the Education Act 1997 sections 43–45 (amended in 2004 to cover Years 7 and 8), schools must provide a planned programme of careers education within the curriculum in Years 7 to 11. This statutory requirement is outside the National Curriculum and there is no statutory programme of study for careers education. However, in 2003 the DfES published a recommended framework, *Careers education and guidance in England: a national framework 11–19* (DfES 2003). It provides recommended learning outcomes for Key stages 3 and 4, and post-16.

The Education Act 1997 requires schools to give Connexions Personal Advisers (careers advisers) access to students so that they can provide careers guidance, and to provide those advisers with information on pupils. They are also required to offer students information on all opportunities in learning and work.

Under the Employment and Training Act 1973 (as amended by the 1993 Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act) the Secretary of State for Education and Skills has a statutory duty to provide a careers service to assist all students in post-16 transitions. Since the passing of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, this duty has been discharged through Connexions Partnerships. Changes to this policy will be announced in the implementation plan following the *Youth matters* Green Paper (DfES 2005c), sometime in 2006.

The programmes of study for personal social and health education (PSHE) in the National Curriculum for Key stages 3 and 4 contain elements of CEG (DfES/QCA 2004). There is no statutory requirement for schools and colleges to provide careers education programmes for students after age 16 but the provisions of the Education Act 1997 for providing up-to-date information on opportunities and access to a careers adviser do apply to post-16 students.

Since 2004 schools have had a statutory duty to provide work-related learning for all Key stage 4 students and they must 'have regard to' the non-statutory framework produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA 2003). Much of this guidance relates to CEG and IAG activities, particularly elements 1–5 of the national framework.

Benefits

Effective IAG provision can help to maximise individuals' potential, promote social inclusion and increase participation in learning. It benefits students by:

- raising their aspirations and increasing their motivation by helping them identify educational and occupational goals
- helping them link the knowledge and skills learned in subjects to future opportunities in learning and work
- developing their skills for effective learning through reviewing achievements, setting targets, planning and taking action
- increasing their knowledge of the world of work and employment trends
- demonstrating the links they need to make between living, learning and earning (DfES 2004a; www.cegnet.co.uk).

It also benefits society and the economy by:

- ensuring that young people take advantage of opportunities to gain the knowledge and skills to become employable
- supporting the strategies of schools and colleges for improvement by increasing retention and raising achievement
- supporting social inclusion by re-engaging those young people who are at risk of dropping out of learning (DfES 2000).

Research findings

Since 2000 research about young people and IAG or CEG has been sparse. However, the key findings of the recently published *Reviewing the evidence base for careers work in schools* included these points:

The research suggests that young people with a high level of career-related skills, including careers exploration, self-awareness and self-confidence are more likely to make satisfactory subject choices at Year 9 and less likely to modify their choices or switch courses post-16. Interventions such as individual interviews, group sessions, career-related information, and practical and work-related activities, along with the specific CEG programmes such as The Real Game and computer assisted career-guidance, have been shown to have a positive impact on the development of pupils' career related skills. It is therefore possible to infer that these interventions can also help facilitate successful transitions for young people.

(Bowes, Smith and Morgan 2005)

The evidence suggests that the extent to which CEG interventions are tailored to meet the needs of individuals or groups of individuals rather than the needs of the organisations is a key factor determining the effectiveness and impact of CEG on young people's skill development and subsequent transitions.

(Bowes, Smith and Morgan 2005)

Pupils appear to value the involvement of people in the provision of career information, often seeing them as more important and/or more helpful than written sources of information.

(Bowes, Smith and Morgan 2005)

Ofsted findings

In its report, *Developing a coherent 14–19 phase of education and training*, Ofsted's key findings about IAG concluded among other things that:

- *There is insufficient thorough, impartial advice and guidance to inform young people's decisions at key transition points.*
- *Young people's understanding of the whole range of qualifications and settings for study post-16 is often very limited.*
- *Good progress has been made in developing flexible individual learning plans (ILPs) for use through the 14–19 phase, but their use is at an early stage.*

- *While young people are usually well supported in their home institution, as new approaches to the 14 to 19 curriculum have been adopted, the support and guidance provided for learners moving between institutions has assumed greater importance. Much remains to be done in supporting students who learn outside their home institution, and in enabling them to make well informed choices at points of transition. Most strategies of LAs, local LSCs and Connexions partnerships do not place sufficient emphasis on the need to provide information, advice and guidance for all young people on the full range of courses available. Nor do they clearly demonstrate how this might be achieved.*
- *Current arrangements for guidance around the end of Key Stage 3 fail to ensure that all young people are properly supported to make good choices about pathways of study from 14 to 19. This is inhibiting the proper implementation of important aspects of the National Framework 11–19 for careers education and guidance. Young people's ability to 'make realistic and informed choices of options post-14', is not currently well developed.*

(Ofsted 2005a)

The new common inspection schedule for schools and other post-16 provision (Ofsted 2005b) focuses on the five strands of *Every child matters*, and requires learning providers to pay attention in their self-evaluation process to IAG and CEG under three sections:

- 1 How well do learners achieve?
 - the acquisition of workplace skills
 - the development of skills that contribute to the social and economic well-being of the learner.
- 2 How well are learners guided and supported?
 - the quality and accessibility of information, advice and guidance to learners in relation to courses and programmes, and ... career progression.
- 3 How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?
 - How effective are the links made with other providers, services, employers and other organisations to promote the integration of care, education and any extended services to enhance learning and promote well-being? (Ofsted 2005b)

Critical success factors

A well-designed IAG/CEG programme for 14–19 year olds will include curriculum activities as well as information, advice and guidance (LSDA 2006b). Curriculum provision supports 14–19 year olds' progression through learning and work by enabling learners to use IAG effectively to make informed choices and successful transitions. Research reports, inspection findings and the experiences of 14–19 Pathfinders suggest that organisations with effective curriculum provision in this aspect of 14–19 IAG:

- have a clear and shared vision of the purpose of their provision and how it contributes to learners' achievement, development and progression
- regard such provision as central to the main curriculum and have made explicit links with other curriculum areas and with processes such as target setting, mentoring, coaching and progression planning
- have involved people from outside their own organisations in developing their provision
- have structured programmes developed in response to learner needs and with active support from senior managers.

If young people are to make informed choices they need access to objective, relevant, accurate and user-friendly information about the labour market and opportunities in learning and work. Those supporting them need similar information so that they can help young people to explore all their options and make the best possible choices. Achieving this requires well-maintained and accessible information systems, appropriate staff development and structured opportunities for learners to become familiar with the resources available.

Research reports and inspection findings suggest that organisations with effective provision in this aspect of 14–19 IAG:

- ensure that resources are easily accessible and available in a range of user-friendly formats, including ICT
- ensure that resources are up to date, unbiased, cover the full range of options and are appropriate to age and ability
- obtain feedback from young people, staff and others on the range, quality and usefulness of the resources provided (see Unit 3)
- ensure that systems are well managed and maintained
- provide staff training, particularly for individuals who are not careers specialists
- provide curriculum opportunities that allow young people to become familiar with the resources available.

Advice and guidance covers the wide range of conversations and interventions that staff providing IAG will have with learners, ranging from giving basic information about the entry qualifications for a particular course, how to complete a UCAS form and using individual learning plans with individuals, to impartial in-depth guidance with individuals who have no ideas about what their next steps might be.

Effective arrangements for advice and guidance help learners to:

- review and pull together their experiences, progress and achievements
- identify the knowledge, skills and understanding that they have gained from the full range of their learning
- increase their self-knowledge, understand their strengths and identify their learning and development needs
- identify, investigate, assess and select appropriate opportunities
- set, review and achieve short-term targets and medium and longer-term goals.

The acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills and the provision of IAG for 14–19 year olds cannot be achieved without well-managed and sustainable systems in the local areas and establishments where they learn and plan their progression.

New IAG arrangements are emerging in response to 14–19 reforms and changes in children's and young people's support services. The most successful of these appear to be those which have:

- a clear vision to guide developments, a shared sense of purpose and a commitment to strong partnership working
- collaborative planning and delivery, including clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- structured support, including training, for those working with and helping young people
- quality assurance based on a shared set of expectations, accurate data and the systematic monitoring and analysis of learners' and organisational needs.

Self-review questions

The DfES is currently developing quality standards for IAG for 14–19 year olds in England. The draft should be in its consultation phase by September 2006 and the intention is to have the standards in place by April 2007. It is understood that the implementation plan following the *Youth matters* Green Paper will contain details of how providers of IAG, including learning providers, will be required to meet these standards in order to access publicly funded IAG services. It is likely that schools will be expected to continue to provide programmes of CEG to meet their statutory duties, but within a more coordinated approach to students' personal development (QCA 2004).

Quality awards for CEG have existed for schools and colleges to use as a tool for review and improvement for several years. Their use varies across the country and they are usually supported by the local Connexions service. A school or college wishing to review their CEG/IAG programme and improve it to support their students' personal development, as well as the changes in the 14–19 phase, will find these self-review questions useful.

Does your school/college have:

- **a whole-school approach to IAG?** A successful whole-school approach is based on a shared vision of the benefits of IAG/CEG, including raising standards of attainment. It should involve real partnership between all members of the school community, including governors, parents, external contributors and other providers.
- **a needs-led planning process?** Students' needs are at the heart of effective IAG provision. A good planning process should be based on identifying relevant personal development objectives and outcomes for all students. These should be linked to the school's strategic planning objectives and ethos and will take account of the statutory requirements for careers education and guidance, work-related learning, and the non-statutory framework for PSHE.
- **a programme of planned learning opportunities across the curriculum?** Learning opportunities should include clear and effective assessment methods and recognition of achievement. They should be firmly based on learning outcomes, for instance, those in National Framework for CEG (DfES 2005b) and the QCA Framework for Work-related Learning (Employment and Training Act 1973) as well as the contribution that other subjects (for example, English) can make.
- **a committed team of staff?** Schools should invest in fostering commitment among staff. It is very important that teachers receive appropriate training and support for planning and delivering those aspects IAG for which they are responsible, whether lessons in the curriculum, running a resource centre, providing advice and guidance, or managing work experience. Training for supporting students' transitions is not yet part of initial teacher training.

- **student participation?** This should go beyond active involvement in their learning and career planning. Schools should try to engage students as full partners in all aspects of IAG that contribute to their progression. This will include planning, feedback and evaluation.
- **integrated student support and guidance?** There should be clear and explicit links between curriculum activities and other IAG activities that support individual students. A good referral system is essential – to support from within school or colleges to support from outside, notably the Connexions service. All students and staff should be aware of it and how to use it to benefit all students' progression into, through and out of the 14–19 phase.

Exemplar strategic plan

Strategic intent	Capacity-building measures	Strategic planning tasks
To improve the quality of information, advice and guidance available for 14–19 learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure that key staff undertake appropriate IAG training ■ Provide resources for IAG to be fully integrated into the e-learning strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Work towards a recognised quality standard for careers education and guidance ■ Develop individual learning plans, which focus on careers, skills and employability ■ Ensure IAG is part of the virtual learning environment
To improve the impartiality of information, advice and guidance available for 14–19 learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Build close relationships with Connexions, employers and partner institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consult students and parents about improving IAG provision ■ Develop a programme of vocational tasters to widen access to provision in other institutions

	Time frame	Responsibility	Budget

Web links

www.cegnet.co.uk

The website of the Careers Education Support Programme (DfES), from which most of the documents referred to here as well as briefings, case studies and a scheme of work for CEG can be downloaded.

Strategic aim

To challenge gender and ethnic stereotyping in 14–19 vocational course choices and work experience

Rationale

Gender segregation of jobs continues in this country despite nearly 30 years of equal opportunities legislation and general recognition of the economic consequences of skills shortages in key areas. A major aim of the 14–19 educational reforms is to allow young people access to greater choice and flexibility to follow pathways more tailored to their aptitudes and aspirations. It is ironic, therefore, that greater choice of vocational courses has done little yet to challenge gender segregation, and may even have reinforced it. There are also common stereotypes of the kinds of work undertaken by different ethnic groups, which need to be challenged by educational and training organisations. Materials and training are provided by the Gender Equality and Race Inclusion (GERI) project (www.geriproject.org/teachers/elibrary.php), led by Lancashire Connexions and funded by LSC and the European Social Fund (ESF). It is clear that much more needs to be done by all concerned in 14–19 education and training to counter ethnic and gender stereotyping.

Policy

In March 2005, three government departments (DfES, Department of Trade and Industry and Department of Work and Pensions) jointly published *Skills getting on in business, getting on in work*, a White Paper (DfES 2005b; www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/skillsgettingon/) aimed at employers, which claimed:

We seek a fair society which ensures that every individual, irrespective of background, ethnicity, gender, faith, disability or postcode, is helped to realise their own capability for learning, and raise their quality of life.

(DfES 2005b)

The White Paper makes suggestions about improving skills, including the need to:

Tackle the obstacles that continue to prevent fair access for all to high-quality training and good jobs, so that no group is held back by prejudice, discrimination or stereotyping. Through better tailoring of information and guidance, we will help people work out the best options for them on skills, training and jobs, in order to achieve their ambitions.

(DfES 2005b)

The LSC (www.lsc.gov.uk) has developed a strategy for promoting equality and diversity in the 14–19 programmes that it funds, and institutions should familiarise themselves with it. The DfES's *14–19 Education and skills implementation plan* (DfES 2005a) also stresses the importance of partnerships taking account of equality and diversity in a more systematic way.

Benefits

There are a number of potential benefits for students from an effective programme to combat gender and ethnic stereotyping. Students:

- feel able to access the full range of courses in the learner entitlement
- are motivated by courses more suited to their aptitudes and abilities
- have improved self-esteem and reduced long-term disaffection
- already making non-traditional choices feel more included and less atypical
- experience less pressure from parents and peers as more balanced groups emerge
- girls and minority ethnic student's career prospects and long-term earning potential are enhanced.

Research findings

Research into equality issues and the 14–19 pathfinder programme reported little targeted work in the fields of ethnicity, disability and looked after young people (EOC/DfES 2005). Less than a third of pathfinders reported interventions relating to gender issues. The report advocated more work with parents to counter stereotyped thinking, more work between schools and organisations working in the field of equality, and the need for more continuing professional development for teachers.

Other recent research by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) showed that there are high levels of support for change in order to give young people real choice of vocational courses, training and work (EOC 2004). The research also showed that job segregation is a class issue as well as a gender issue, since in areas such as medicine and law; the gender divide has become much less relevant, whereas in manual trades such as plumbing and construction, there has been slow progress. The male-dominated sectors are construction, engineering, plumbing and ICT. Men are also over-represented in science-related occupations.

The EOC found that two-thirds of working women are still found in five occupational groups – the five ‘c’s: cleaning, catering, caring, cashiering and clerical, most of which are low paid. It would appear that where girls are achieving academically, they are breaking into the professions. However, they are not breaking into the trades, where pay is much higher than in traditional female work. In addition, boys continue to underachieve at school, relative to girls.

In a telephone survey of 1100 adults, carried out for the EOC (EOC/DfES 2005), around half the men and women consulted thought that the advice they received on leaving school and deciding what kind of job they wanted to do was influenced by their sex. Young people need up-to-date information about qualifications, pay scales and career prospects (see Unit 1).

Research has revealed that the uptake of work experience placements is overwhelmingly gender-stereotyped (EOC 2005). Work experience organisers tend to see freedom of choice as more important than extending opportunities. ‘Own finds’ are encouraged as entrepreneurial. Organisers acknowledge that stereotypical perceptions influence students’ choices, but they also recognise that some students are deterred by sexist workplaces. The main problem for organisers is to find and keep placements that conform to health and safety regulations. It is not in their interest to discourage ‘own finds’ or to challenge employers about sexist workplaces. However, work experience is a major opportunity to broaden students’ horizons pre-16, and this opportunity is being largely wasted.

Case studies

The Doncaster 14–19 Pathfinder developed projects to address gender stereotyping in students’ careers choices.

The Skills Road show

This was a ‘hands on’ initiative aimed at Key stage 4 students who were given the opportunity to ‘taste’ a variety of vocational courses, including hair and beauty, catering and hospitality, motor vehicle maintenance, construction and engineering. Before the Skills Road Show, there had been a careers convention where students had collected lots of leaflets but, it was generally acknowledged, had gained little insight into what a course or career would really be like.

All schools were invited to take part in the Skills Road Show. It was left to the schools to decide whether to target Year 9, 10 or 11. Typically, approximately 150 students took part from each school. The Skills Road Show significantly increased the number of young people in Doncaster schools who can ‘taste’ different types of vocational course. Students appreciated the more adult atmosphere of the taster sessions, compared with their normal school environment. Although this was only a one-off event for the young people, there was evidence that it had increased their levels of confidence in thinking about their future. Where the event had been evaluated by schools, the feedback was positive: the young people had enjoyed the ‘hands-on’ features of the activities within the different types of vocations being showcased; and it had raised awareness of possible curriculum and career pathways. Schools had also forged closer links with local training providers as a result of the Skills Road Show.

WITBE

The Women Into the Built Environment (WITBE) programme was specifically targeted at encouraging female students to consider careers in the construction industry. It involved collaboration with Sheffield Hallam University in conjunction with JIVE (www.jivepartners.org.uk) and offered school-aged girls the chance to learn about practical construction work by undertaking activities such as house surveying, design modification and visiting a construction site. Two Doncaster schools were involved with WITBE. The female students interviewed understood and supported the rationale behind events such as WITBE. The opportunity to undertake a ‘taster’ in a non-traditional occupational sector within a female-only group was valued. Girls felt more confident in this environment. Collaboration between Doncaster Pathfinder and Sheffield Hallam University was cited as effective. The opportunity to experience a variety of hands-on activities was valued by the students interviewed.

Learning points

There was little parental involvement in these projects, apart from parents giving consent for their child’s participation, where this was required. Evidence gathered throughout the research suggested that a major barrier to challenging young people’s stereotypical choices is their own entrenched attitudes and those of their parents. Both the Skills Road Show and the WITBE project organisers commented on the need to involve more female role models, both to discuss their experiences of the jobs and career pathways, and also to act as mentors. There was general agreement that finding female role models is often problematic. In addition, there are issues relating to funding the costs of their time and travel which is exacerbated if the women are self-employed. In the early Skills Road Shows, young people were able to choose which activities to ‘taste’. Some of the young people were reluctant to try something different. There was a strong case here for ensuring that all students are given the opportunity to

taste a variety of courses, including those that are non-traditional. Ideally, the aim should be for programmes that not only introduce young females to non-traditional occupational sectors, but also provide mentors to them throughout their training and early careers to help them to overcome the barriers involved in working in a traditionally male-dominated environment.

(Source: Doncaster 14–19 Pathfinder adapted from EOC/DfES 2005)

Critical success factors

There are strong attitudinal barriers which influence gender and ethnic stereotyping. Institutions and collaborative partnerships that want to address this issue seriously need to counter entrenched attitudes among staff, employers, the peer group, parents and students themselves. In work experience, the prevalence of free choice as the approach of matching students to placements reinforces stereotyping.

The following critical success factors include the kinds of strategies that need to be employed to challenge gender and ethnic stereotyping:

- 1 The institution has made a commitment through its policies and practices to tackle ethnic and gender stereotyping seriously.
- 2 A member of the senior management team has responsibility for monitoring gender and ethnic balance on vocational programmes and work experience choices.
- 3 Students are consulted about what deters them from choosing particular options and work placements and what things would make non-stereotyped courses more attractive options (see Unit 3).
- 4 Programme information and information, advice and guidance materials are reviewed for images and messages that reinforce stereotypes.
- 5 Institutions, employers and their partners in vocational courses and work placements cooperate to develop tasters and preparation programmes that challenge stereotypes and make students aware of relevant labour market issues.
- 6 Educational materials that aim to counter stereotyped choices are used before choices are made (www.geriproject.org/teachers/elibrary.php, www.works4me.org.uk, www.knowyourplace.org.uk/).
- 7 Role models among staff, employers, business people and former students are used to promote counter-stereotyped choices.
- 8 Mentors from ethnic minorities can encourage students to move beyond traditional stereotyped course and careers choices.
- 9 Parents, teachers and students are made aware of the positive benefits from choosing non-stereotyped courses.
- 10 There is a programme of additional support and encouragement for students wanting to make non-traditional choices including training in assertiveness skills.

Exemplar strategic plan

Strategic intent	Capacity-building measures	Strategic planning tasks
To challenge gender and ethnic stereotyping in vocational course choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create a working group to investigate current patterns, review materials and consult learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop a plan to counter stereotyping and monitor its implementation and impact ■ Develop and use role models from minority ethnic communities and women in non-stereotyped job roles ■ Take positive action to change attitudes among staff, students, parents and employers
To challenge gender and ethnic stereotyping in work experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create a working group to investigate the current work experience programme including preparation and matching criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Work with the local central work experience provider to develop a strategy to counter stereotyping ■ Develop a list of sympathetic employers who want to encourage non-stereotyped choices ■ Implement a plan to support students making non-stereotyped choices

Self-review questions

The following questions will help institutions to review their track record on action to challenge gender and ethnic stereotyping in course choice and work placements. The EOC's Action for Change resources (www.eoc.org.uk) are an excellent source of ideas.

- Do you have monitoring data which describes the current gender and ethnic balance on vocational courses and work experience?
- Is a senior member of staff responsible for equality of opportunity including challenging gender and ethnic stereotyping?
- What successful counter-stereotyping initiatives are there in your local collaborative partnership?
- What role do careers teachers and Connexions staff currently play in reinforcing or challenging stereotypes?
- Have course and work experience materials been reviewed to remove bias and stereotyped assumptions?

	Time frame	Responsibility	Budget

- Is positive action taken to promote a consideration of the full range of options in the learner entitlement to students, staff and parents?
- What hidden messages do vocational teachers give to students about who there courses are primarily aimed at?
- What package of support is available for students making non-stereotyped choices?
- What internal and external role models are there who could be used to promote counter-stereotyped choices?

Web links

www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/skillsgettingon/

You can access the Skills White Paper, *Skills : getting on in business, getting on in work* (DfES 2005b).

www.eoc.org.uk

The EOC has published a lot of relevant research including, *Employers, young people and gender segregation (England)*, Working Paper Series No 28, research carried out by the University of Leicester, 2005.

Action for Change is a series of good practice guides aimed at a range of stakeholders: LSCs, training providers, employers, careers advice professionals, teachers and those involved in work-related learning. They provide practical guidance based on examples of actions taken by organisations to open up non-traditional opportunities for women and men.

www.geriproject.org/teachers/elibrary.php

Gender Equality and Race Inclusion (GERI) was a project led by Connexions, Lancashire, aiming to implement a series of initiatives to reduce gender and ethnic stereotyping in careers information, advice, guidance and choice. Materials include guidance for teachers and activities for students, as well as a DVD and ideas for a drama workshop.

www.jivepartners.org.uk

JIVE was funded through the ESF initiative, EQUAL, and endeavoured to test and promote new ways of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities in the labour market across the European Union. It provides a range of resources and guidelines to promote its aims.

www.knowyourplace.org.uk/

Know Your Place is a website for young women considering a career in construction, engineering, ICT or plumbing. The site provides answers to frequently asked questions and details of organisations that can give advice and support.

www.lsc.gov.uk

LSC has published its own Equality and Diversity Strategy 2004/07, November 2004.

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/genderandachievement

DfES gender and achievement website for teachers, LEAs and others with an interest in gender differences and achievement.

www.works4me.org.uk

An interactive website for 11–15 year olds, launched by the EOC, which aims to raise awareness of issues such as pay, choice and wider opportunities. It provides a virtual careers centre with interactive features, games, quizzes, animation and music. Users can browse information about case studies, pay scales, qualifications, work experience, myths and reality, and what employers say.

Strategic aim

To develop an ethos in which learners are routinely involved in organisational and community decision-making processes, especially on matters that directly affect them

Rationale

Learner voice:

- increases young people's confidence and personal skills (Kirby *et al.* 2003)
- contributes to effectiveness of educational and community organisations by improving learners' sense of community and belonging (Kirby *et al.* 2003)
- improves services by encouraging learners to shape and value the services they receive (DfES 2005b)
- helps build young people's knowledge of democratic processes and encourages active citizenship (DfES 2005b).

Definitions

Learner voice is at the heart of *Every child matters*, which states that 'participation' consists of:

asking children and young people what works, what doesn't and what could work better, and involving them on an ongoing basis, in the design, delivery and evaluation of services. The Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme aims to ensure that policies and services are designed around the needs of children and young people, and that they are involved in decision making at a local and national level. Engaging children and young people in this way gives them an opportunity to make a positive contribution in their communities.

(DfES 2004b)

This definition encapsulates two strands of learner voice:

- the opportunity for pupils, students, trainees, in whatever their learning environment, to be consulted about curriculum provision, teaching and learning approaches, assessment strategies and all other aspects of their education or training. The Foster review of further education says, 'Learner involvement and representation ... is the key to improved performance by colleges and improved outcomes for learners. FE colleges should be required to collect learners' views in a consistent and systematic way as a key way of improving college provision. And they should also consult learners on any major changes to their learning and the learning environment' (DfES/LSC 2005).
- the opportunity for learners to be consulted about the running of the school, college, training organisation or youth/voluntary group. Young people have traditionally been consulted through student/trainee councils, often about the everyday issues: the canteen, the toilets, uniform. However, increasingly, they are being involved in broader policy issues through attendance at governors' meetings, interview panels and academic boards (www.consultingpupils.co.uk).

A third strand, focuses more on youth community participation which can take a variety of forms. Some areas have set up youth forums to discuss local, national and international issues; some local government councils have set up advisory panels to hear views on ways they can make improve services for young people and generally to heighten their feeling of belonging; and some, like Lambeth, have established 'young mayors', elected by young people, to provide a more focused voice representing the youth perspective. There are often close relationships between schools/colleges and community youth forums with the educational institutions feeding these groups with representatives and preparing and briefing their students to take part.

Policy

Every child matters was published by the government in 2004 and gave rise to the Children's Act, which provides an enabling framework for local authorities and partners to ensure that there is a good level of participation of children and young people in the design and delivery of services. According to *Every child matters* (DfES 2004b), the five outcomes that are most important to children and young people are:

- 1 be healthy
- 2 stay safe
- 3 enjoy and achieve
- 4 make a positive contribution
- 5 achieve economic well-being.

As a direct result of the publication of *Every child matters*, the Green Paper, *Youth matters* (DfES 2005c) went out to consultation in July 2005. It underlined the importance of giving children and young people a voice and aimed to address four key challenges:

- how to engage more young people in positive activities and empower them to shape the services they receive
- how to encourage more young people to volunteer and become involved in their communities
- how to provide better information, advice and guidance to young people to help them make informed choices about their lives
- how to provide better and more personalised intensive support for each young person who has serious problems or gets into trouble.

Learner voice had been an area of concern for the LSC before the publication of *Every child matters*. It published guidance in 2002 which stated:

The Learning and Skills Council is committed to listening to the voice of the learner in shaping its policies, and the programmes and projects it supports. The LSC believes that it can only secure the best standards of learning and skills if providers and partners take account of the needs, aspirations and circumstances of young people and put their interests first ... The LSC strongly encourages the establishment of arrangements to ensure the active and effective engagement of young people in influencing policy and provision.

(DfES 2005c)

Learner voice was also a theme within the 14–19 Pathfinder programme. However, there was very little evidence of activity around this theme. It is implicit within *14–19 education and skills implementation plan* that learners are heard. It says, for example:

Over time, patterns of demand will become established and providers will need to respond to the wishes of young people, expanding popular courses where possible and closing unsuccessful courses which are well supplied elsewhere. We will also make information available to young people about the local and national labour market. In this way, the needs of young people will become more central in determining the nature of provision locally.

(DfES 2005a p48)

Benefits

The following list of benefits is derived from LSC guidance (LSC 2002) on the learner voice.

Benefits to providers	Benefits to learners
Better understanding of learners and learning	The opportunity to influence and reap the reward of the outcomes
Improved participation, retention, achievement and quality	Improved motivation and achievement of learning goals
Priorities developed according to needs	Acquiring and developing transferable skills with other learners
Good practice and provision reinforced	Feeling recognised and valued for making a difference

Research findings

The main source of research and evaluation into learner voice in schools is the ESRC-funded Teaching and Learning Research Programme. Schools across the country are working with research teams on six research projects. One of these projects is researching the potential of pupils to act as co-researchers into the processes of teaching and learning. The findings of the research project appear on the ESRC Network website (www.consultingpupils.co.uk).

The Carnegie Young People Initiative (CYPI; www.carnegietrust.org.uk) has carried out a number of research projects on youth voice, including 'Expanding and sustaining involvement: a snapshot of participation infrastructure for young people living in England' and 'Measuring the magic: evaluating and researching young people's participation in public decision-making'.

Two reports have been produced on the Post-16 Citizenship Development Programme, which is funded by the DfES and managed by the LSDA. One is by Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) (Ofsted/ALI 2005) and one by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) (DfES 2004c). Both looked at student voice among other aspects of citizenship. Ofsted/ALI commented:

Representative work takes different forms, but in many of the projects the focus was on developing more effective school, college or youth councils. Successful representative systems involve all young people in the institution with a continuing interaction between, on one hand the representatives and those who hold them accountable, and on the other, representatives and those in authority, partners and outside agencies with whom they discuss, negotiate and plan.

Case studies

Consulting students about teaching and learning

Worthing High School was part of the Learning about Improvement Project. It wanted to use the student voice to improve the quality of learning in the classroom and focused on ways of helping Year 10 and Year 11 students to take more responsibility for their learning. The school established a working group of 30 Year 10 students and set up consultation 'cells' of five students plus a teacher mentor. The students kept diaries throughout Year 10, which were only seen by an outside researcher who also conducted interviews. They also designed a questionnaire to capture the thoughts of the Year 11 group in their last term.

During the course of the project there were six consultations. There were strict ground rules to make sure staff did not feel threatened, for example they did not mention staff names and made constructive points rather than just voiced grievances. The team fed back to staff at regular intervals. It became clear that students in Year 10 had not been clear about how important certain elements were for their progress and what independent learning was until the year was almost over, and that they valued the process of reflection and wanted more praise. As a result of the consultation the Year 9 induction programme was completely revised.

(Source: www.russellcommission.org/,
Consulting Pupils Newsletter, February 2003)

Student representatives in a sixth form college

B6 Sixth Form College (Brooke House) opened in 2002 after a review of post-16 provision in the London Borough of Hackney found that young people lacked the opportunity locally to access high-quality academic education. From the beginning, the college was planned as a joint endeavour between staff and students. According to its website, it is 'dedicated to individuality and partnership. We continually seek to represent the views of everyone who is part of our organisation, both students and staff alike.'

Students in all 25 tutor groups elected two representatives to form a new student representative body. From these groups, two students were elected to the college's governing body and some were elected to college committees to help make decisions about tendering processes and the issuing of contracts to companies to supply services to the college. Students have been involved in setting up and running catering services since the college opened, and they effectively run the college's relationship with these services. They meet the owner and the college catering manager every few weeks to review the service and plan menus, taking into account student representations. They also deal with pricing policies and subsidies and make decisions about which vending machines to install. They are fully involved in deciding the future direction of the college, including detailed discussions with the architects who are designing the next phase of the building programme, and they have been involved in the re-branding and publicity of the college.

(Source: LSDA Post-16 Citizenship Development Programme)

Critical success factors

The main barriers to successful implementation of a strategy to encourage the learner voice are (Rudduck 2005):

- the challenge to traditional power relationships, leading to uncertainties on the part of staff and learners about boundaries
- the amount of time taken up, and perceived as time taken from coverage of programmes
- the question of inclusion – whose voice is listened to by staff?
- the inequalities of confidence and linguistic competence, so that some learners can dominate conversations
- staff not having a genuine interest in what learners say
- the temptation to make the learner voice an additional extra, rather than part of a coherent, institution-wide policy
- staff not feeling that they are listened to by senior management, and therefore not being concerned about the learner voice.

These barriers can be overcome if the ethos of the organisations enables staff and learners to share decision-making honestly, and communicate about reasons for some actions not being possible.

The *Hear by right* standards (Badham and Wade 2005) have listed the critical success factors that need to be in place.

Children and young people's involvement is a visible commitment that is properly resourced

- 1 There is a visible commitment to the principle and practice of children and young people's participation from senior managers and leaders.
- 2 Participation is built into the organisation and is reflected in its strategic planning, services, resources and communication.
- 3 Relevant staff, managers and leaders have the opportunity to develop the attitudes and skills needed to work effectively with children and young people.

Children and young people's involvement is valued

- 4 Children and young people are treated honestly and with respect and their contributions are taken seriously.
- 5 Feedback to children and young people about the effects of their involvement is prompt and clear.
- 6 Children and young people's participation is rewarded and celebrated.

Children and young people have an equal opportunity to get involved

- 7 All children and young people have a right to participate in decisions that affect them.
- 8 Children and young people feel welcomed and included and are not discriminated against or prevented from participating effectively on the grounds of ethnic origin, language, religion, culture, disability, age, gender, sexuality or where they live.
- 9 Care and time is taken to go the extra mile to ensure children and young people facing greatest barriers to getting involved are aware of and can take up opportunities to have their say.
- 10 Relevant training and support are provided to children and young people so that they can contribute effectively.
- 11 Information is available to children and young people in good time and is accessible, jargon free and culturally appropriate.

Policies and standards for the participation of children and young people are in place, evaluated and improved

- 12 What the organisation is trying to achieve and the intended benefits are clear from the start.
- 13 Children and young people evaluate the process and changes that result from their involvement and help apply lessons learned.
- 14 There are agreed quality standards and codes of conduct for working with children and young people to ensure their participation is safe, sound, effective and evaluated.

Exemplar strategic plan

Strategic intent	Capacity-building measures	Strategic planning tasks
To develop an ethos in which the learner voice is encouraged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop shared understanding among all staff ■ Change culture to encourage all staff and learners to be involved in decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Organise a continuing professional development (CPD) session for all staff ■ Set up working groups, including learners, to consider how current practice needs to change
To provide opportunities for learners to develop the skills, knowledge and attributes necessary for them to be able to express their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Allocate resources to development of necessary training sessions ■ Consult partners outside the organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Appoint a senior member of staff to be responsible for learner voice ■ Consider where relevant skills, knowledge and attributes could be and are being developed and how to build on this

Self-review questions

Schools, colleges, work-based learning providers and local collaborative partnerships can consider these questions and whether the ethos of their organisations supports the learner voice:

- What formal processes do you have in place to consult learners in your organisation?
- Are learners on important policy making groups and committees, such as the governing body or management group?
- Are the numbers sufficient so that they can give each other support and encouragement?
- What informal processes are in place to consult learners?
- How much power is given to the learners? Do they have access to budgets?
- What are the important things to consult about? Are teaching and learning styles on the agenda?
- Have you asked young people what they wish to be consulted about?

	Time frame	Responsibility	Budget

- How representative are the young people involved in the consultation process?
- Are there equal opportunities for all learners?
- What incentives can you offer young people to participate?
- Is there a learners' charter? How has this been constructed and how are the views of particular groups represented.
- How do learners feel about the organisation and how do you find out?

Web links

www.carnegietrust.org.uk

Carnegie Young People Initiative is an initiative of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, set up to increase the influence children and young people have over decisions that affect them. The CYPI runs grassroot projects, carries out research, publishes reports and materials and pilots innovative ways of embedding children and young people's participation in government department work, and in the devolved administrations. It has also published pathfinding reports on organisational standards, measuring the impact of participation, and on how to improve the participation 'infrastructure'.

www.consultingpupils.co.uk

The website of the ESRC Network Project on consulting pupils about teaching and learning. The site includes newsletters and publications produced by the projects, networking details, materials for conferences and useful links. See 'Consulting young people in schools' by Jean Rudduck and Julia Flutter.

www.qca.org.uk/

The QCA website has a section on post-16 citizenship. This provides guidance and case studies on various aspects of citizenship including student voice.

www.russellcommission.org/

The Russell Commission website regularly updates with the latest news on implementing the recommendations of the report. This outlined plans to engage one million new young people in volunteering and community action over the next five years (from 2005).

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14–19: Programme of Support for Delivery of Change on the Ground

